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# A Learning Society for the Promotion of Lifelong Learning in Japan

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# A Learning Society for the Promotion of Lifelong Learning in Japan

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## I. Introduction: Socio-economic Background of A Learning Society (Indicators)

Source: Bureau & Statistics Center, Japanese Government, 2000

### 1) Population

Average life span male : 76.4 female : 84.62

Age structure of population

Under 15 (14.8 %), 15-- 65 (68.5 %), 65 and over (16.7 %)

### 2) Education

Population graduating from schools by age group and sex (%)

Age	Compulsory edu.	Upper secondary edu.	Higher edu.	Attending schools	
20-24	5.6 (4.7)	10.5 (34.8)	-	83.7 (21.9)	100.0
25-29	7.8 (5.4)	42.9 (40.9)	42.3 (49.0)	2.2 (12)	100.0
40-44	9.0 (7.0)	45.6 (52.0)	42.2 (39.2)	0.1 (0.1)	100.0
+65	48.0 (55.3)	34.0 (36.0)	14.2 (4.6)	- (0)	100.0

Students who go on to Higher Education (%) 49.8

Remarks: % in the parenthesis is female

### 3) Labor

Labor force participation rate: 62.9 % of the population aged 15 and above

Female workers in total workforce (%) 40.7

Proportion of part-time work force which is female (%) 71.6

Unemployment rate: 4.7% (Male: 4.8%; Female: 4.5%)

### 4) Diffusion of internet

Percentage of each group with access to the Internet (%):

Large size enterprise (over 300 workers) 95.8

Small & middle enterprise (over 5 - 299 workers) 44.8

Households 34.0

Source: White Paper 2001, "Information and Communications in Japan"

Source: White Paper 2001, "Information and Communications in Japan"

Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Post and Telecommunications

5) Gender Equality (Gender Equality Indicator)

International Comparison of Women's Participation in Policy and Decision-Making in Japan

Human Development Index (HDI) Rank 4<sup>th</sup> HDI 0.924

Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) Rank 38<sup>th</sup> GEM 0.494

Source: UNDP Human Development Report, 1999

(Comments and Other Perspectives)

- (1) The current average life span is about 82 years with 18% of the population being over 65 years old. The number of children has sharply decreased. The quality of preschool education, learning on parenthood and support systems became social needs. At present target group of lifelong learning is older people and young children.
- (2) Japanese adults need education beyond that of high school level.
- (3) Almost all Japanese workers have only two days' holiday per week and little time for extra learning during their free time.
- (4) Women are 41% of the total workforce and 72% of the total part-time workforce is female.
- (5) The use of information technology is being popularized and intergenerational teaching and learning activities are readily available.
- (6) To solve the gender based social inequality in Japan women must cultivate their consciousness and ability to empower themselves politically, economically and socially. Male attitudes and behavior are also needed as part of wider social change.

## II. Learning: Aspirations and Access

Source: "Opinion Survey on Lifelong Learning", Public Relations Office. Cabinet Office,  
December 2000

1) Phrase "Lifelong Learning" well known 74.0%; un-known 26.0%

2) Participated in lifelong learning activities during 2000 (%)

(N=3,448 persons MT=141.9%)

Hobby/interest (music, fine arts, flower arrangement, dance calligraphy etc)	22.0
Health/ sports (Health improvement, nutrition, swimming etc)	21.7
Vocational Training	9.4
Living skills (Cooking, Sowing, knitting etc)	8.0
Knowledge & Skills for Volunteer activities (Book transcription, sign language and care)	6.4
Acquire some culture (Literature, History etc)	6.2
Social issues (Current events, International issues, environmental issues)	5.0
Childrearing & Education	4.4
Foreign Language	3.0
Others	0.6
No activities	54.7
No answer	0.5

### (Comments and Other Perspectives)

- (1) The word "Lifelong Learning" was known to 74.0% of respondents. In 2000, lifelong learning activities were participated in by only 45% of respondents with more than half of those surveyed not participating. The main reason was that there was no time to do so because of work pressures on men and domestic demands on women. The second reason was a lack of motivation.
- (2) Enjoying their hobbies and interests, such as music, fine arts, flower arrangement, dance, calligraphy and so on, is the leading learning activity (22.0%) for Japanese people.  
Today everyone expects to live an enriched life, aiming to develop his or her personality to the full and striving to achieve self-fulfillment.
- (3) The second greatest learning activities is health improvement and sport (21.7%)  
Japanese people seek lifelong good health through sport.
- (4) The third leading learning activity is vocational training. As mentioned before contemporary society requires information technology and computer literacy. At a short course on computer, e-mail and internet provided by the municipal Board of Education in town or city the applicants, men in their 60s and women in their 50's

where twice as many as the available places.

- (5) Voluntary activities are not extravagant for the affluent. It became one of a stage to express their knowledge and skills. At the same time people have to participate in a balanced independent community development.

### 3) Pattern of Lifelong Learning Activities during 2000 (%)

(N=1,544 persons MT 151.99%)

Carried out independently or sharing an interest with group or circle	40.5
Participation in lectures at public sector Citizen's Public Hall	32.7
Culture Center and sports Club	24.4
Radio & TV	14.1
School Extension (Upper secondary school~University)	11.9
Library	9.7
Correspondent Education (Private sector)	5.1
University of the air	1.1
Others	10.2
Unknown	1.9

Source: Opinion Research on Lifelong Learning,  
Cabinet Office, Prime Minister's Office, December 2000

### (Comments and Other Perspectives)

- (1) The learning pattern of activity at 40.5 % is enjoying hobbies and interests independently or in a group or circle.
- (2) Secondly, at 32.7%, there is attendance at lecture course provided by local education authority in cities or villages. (In Japan there is more than 17,000 Citizen's Public Hall, citizen's facilities called " Koumin-kan" throughout the country. In accordance with local issues and characteristics, Citizens' Public Halls play a role as a center of learning activities for local people and are also used as places for local people to interact with each other.
- (3) The third leading type of activity is carried out at culture centers or sports clubs. (24.4%), These are profit making cultural, educational or sports enterprises connected to other business such as the media, department stores and railways.
- (4) In Japan there are diverse learning opportunities through Radio and TV programs provided by Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK).
- (5) The University of the Air can make an especially important contribution as an institution of higher education that is accessible to all, with no limits on time and location.

### III. Lifelong learning Activities

#### 1) Private Sector

##### (1) Group or circle activities for lifelong learning activities

The pattern of Japanese learning activities is for it to be carried on in a group or circle, as mentioned before.

In the past it has been said that the enjoyment of hobby or interest were purely for amusement. However, the situation has changed with the increase in leisure hours at weekends for both school children and adults. People are seeking fulfillment by creating their own autonomous lifestyles based on their own original ideas and ability.

##### (2) Learning of Volunteering Activities

Volunteering is expected to play a much more significant role in enriching the lives of Japanese people. This is a way of social participation in the development of the community and civil society.

Volunteering not only enables self-realization but also makes a significant contribution toward enhancing the quality of life of the entire community.

Drastic economic change is being reflected in people's lifestyle and they have started to develop relationships with one another through mutually shared interests or tastes, rather than through mainly job-based human connections.

However, it is necessary to note that competence and skills are needed by volunteers. Volunteering is not an act of virtue in all cases. In doing volunteer activities, efforts are needed to become helpful to relevant people and to receive the appreciation and support of the public.

One out of four people have acted as a volunteer in Japan. This ratio is lower than that of the U.S. and U.K. Volunteers in Japan are classified, in terms of occupation, into the following: housewives 40 %, retirees 20 %, employees 10 % and self-employed 10%.

Three out of four people hope to contribute to society in some way. Two out of three people have an intention to do volunteering, one of which has not yet done it. This means that the willingness to volunteer is fairly high if we include those with no prior experience.

The main difficulties for volunteers are constraints and lack of information about activities. Many people expect learning to play a role in understanding the nature of volunteering.

In the previous chapter "Learning: Aspirations and Access" we noted that in 2000, 6.4% of the Japanese people learnt knowledge and skills, such as book transcribe, sign language care, relevant to volunteering and 11.9% of people used them.

**(3) NPO activities**

In the last ten years, the number of nonprofit organization (NPO) has increased steadily in Japan. NPO are fundamentally run by people's volunteering activities in the community. The law to promote specified nonprofit activities was promulgated in 1998. The 12 recognized areas of NPO activities and number of organization in each area is as follows: (as of 2001 June)

- Activities to promote health, medical care, or welfare	2,663
- Activities to promote social education (Lifelong learning)	1,690
- Activities to promote community development	1,471
- Activities to promote culture. The arts, or sports	1,130
- Activities to protect the environment	1,162
- Disaster-relief activities	333
- Activities to ensure community safety	326
- Activities to protect human rights or promote peace	636
- International cooperation activities	1,023
- Activities for the creation of a gender-equal society	396
- Activities to promote the sound nurturing of youth	1,457
- Liaising, advising, or support activities related to the operation or activities of organizations performing any of the activities listed above.	1,497
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,781</b>

The NPO Training and Information Center is aiming to develop the human resources in the NPO Sector by providing training programs and management skills for the people in this sector.

**(4) Non-governmental International Co-operation (World Terakoya Movement)**

World Terakoya Movement, Unique Non-governmental International Co-operation

This International Co-operation movement, "Education for all", is funded by the National Federation of UNESCO Associations in Japan in 1989 by the donations from ordinary Japanese citizens for literacy activities in the world.

"Terakoya" was a grass-roots educational facility, which disseminates through out Japan in 17th to 19th centuries and played important role to educate ordinary people who supported the transformation of Japan into a modern nation. The aim is 1) to support grass roots NGOS or local governments working in the field of non-formal education literacy education in developing countries, and 2) to deepen mutual understanding between the Terakoya supporters in Japan and project leaders and learners in respective countries.

Since 1989, the World Terakoya Movement supported 379 projects in 44 countries. 7,000 literacy classes have been held and approximately 750,000 people

have had the opportunity to read and write.

## 2) Public Sector

### (1) City or town level

In accordance with local issues and characteristics, citizens' public halls play a role as a center of learning activities for local people and are also used as places for local people to interact with each other. The following are examples of the distinctive activities of citizens' public halls.

#### [Izumo City, Shimane Prefecture]

A citizens' public hall in Izumo City, Shimane Prefecture plans and offers a wide range of learning opportunities for children to experience the enjoyment and wonder of the natural environment and science which forms an intimate link with their daily lives. Activities for elementary school children include experimental classes in making river water drinkable, classes in making charcoal and projects to survey the ecosystem of plants and animals in the nearby mountains. In the summer vacations, in addition to courses which investigate the wonders of science, such as observations of and experiments with mold, production of batteries using fruit and measurement of the weight of air with members of the city's inventors club and university teaching staff as instructors, there are also hands-on courses such as the excavation of ruins and making earthenware run by museum curators.

#### [Kawasaki City, Kanagawa Prefecture]

A citizens' public hall in Kawasaki City, Kanagawa Prefecture holds Japanese language classes for foreigners with a daytime course mainly for foreign spouses and an evening course for people who work during the day and those who want to study more advanced Japanese. In addition to Japanese language instruction, it provides opportunities for discussing topical issues, gives advice on daily life, and holds classes to which former students of Japanese language classes are invited as teachers.

#### [Otsu City, Shiga Prefecture]

A citizens' public hall in Otsu City, Shiga Prefecture provides learning opportunities for adults with the aim of raising interest in and promoting knowledge about environmental issues. In order to develop ways to resolve environmental issues with a practical approach, the citizens' public hall examines dioxins and other local environmental issues through water quality surveys of Lake Biwa, observations of animals and plants in the surrounding area and other activities seeking civic development through the cooperation of residents, business and government.



[Niigata City, Niigata Prefecture]

The public hall in Niigata City, Niigata Prefecture, has set up a study group comprised of local government, local universities and business and residents. Based on the proposals of the study group, the hall promotes community development led by local people through projects related to daily life addressing social changes and local issues. For example by arranging a symposium on garbage issues

(2) "Deliver Lectures Project for Community Development (DEMAE Kouza)"

by Yashio City, Saitama

Yashio city made a "Declaration on Lifelong Learning City" in 1991 and developed new type of project called "Deliver Lectures Project for Community Development" in 1994. This scheme provides lectures on request by citizens who organize the lecture courses, meetings, forums and events. This project aims a comprehensive visible lifelong learning movement for community development participating both citizens and city officers.

The method used by the project is a menu presenting a variety of lectures and the citizen selects a lecture, which she/he is interested in. The lecturers are volunteers who register at the city and include citizens, industrial, workers, public sector workers, teachers and professors and staff of Yashio city. From 2001, school children, people at lower and upper schools have been included as lecturers. The scheme's greatest success has been in such fields as computers, Kendo, Japanese drama and debate and so on.

As a rule the lecture is provided for a group or circle consisting of more than 5 persons. The scheme makes lectures available all year round between the hours of 9 am to 9 pm.

The project aims to improve understanding of local government staff and citizens about the cities present situation and to provide motivation to participate in a movement of community development.. In 1999, the city provided 182 lecturers and learners totaled 11,820.

3) National Level

(1) Manabi Pia (Lifelong Learning Festival)

This is the National Festival of lifelong learning similar to the celebration of International Literacy Day organized by annually by a prefecture. This event started in 1989. This year "Manabi pia" takes place in Yamagata prefecture in October for 5 days under the theme of "Let us find your Learning". The purpose of the festival is a nationwide presentation of their learning activities, the exchange of

experience and networking.

## (2) The University of the Air

The University of the Air was founded in 1983. The university can make an especially important contribution as an Institution of higher education that is accessible to all, with no limits on time and location.

It is a new-concept institution of higher education and it has the following specific objectives.

1. Provide to the general public an opportunity for college-level education as part of their lifelong learning and development.
2. Provide an innovative and flexible system of college education, open to all high school graduates.
3. Cooperate with existing universities and make full use of the latest knowledge and newest educational technology to offer a system of higher education, which meets contemporary, needs. In addition, the University of the Air aims to contribute to further improving higher education in Japan by strengthening cooperation with other universities, promoting the transfer of credits, encouraging faculty exchange, and disseminating broadcast materials.

The number of students at the university is increasing year on year, currently exceeding 1,000 and up until now over 15,000 people have graduated from the university.

Concerning the student profile in 2000 the proportion of males was 44.9% and females 55.1 %. . As for age those people in their 20's were 25.1% of the total, in the 30's 27.4 %, the 40's 19.6%, the 50s' 14.5%, and those 60 and over 11.6%.

## (3) ELNET

Starting in July 1999 the Educational Information Satellite m-medications Network (ELNET) is a comprehensive network that broadcasts all manner of information on education, culture and sports nationwide. Nationwide broadcasts from 27 locations including, MESSC headquarters, the National Education Center, the National Olympic Memorial Youth Center, and the National Science Museum, as well as education centers in prefectures and designated cities are linked together by communications satellite.

The specific applications of the network are broadcasts for (1) Children's Broadcasting Stations, (2) University extension courses (ELNET Open College) and (3) teacher training for prefectural teachers and relevant educators (ELSTEP) intranet transmissions of a variety of content from the receivers and, and simultaneous data transmissions of documents and data etc.

This project is now studying the possibility of using satellites to transmit extension course programs from universities and other institutions of higher

education to citizens' public halls.

#### 4) National Policy

The Rainbow Plan - The Seven Priority Strategies  
(The Education Reform Plan for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century)

1. Improve students' basic scholastic proficiency 'in easy to understand classes'
  - Implement the 20 students per class system for foundation subjects and advance placement classes
  - Improve classrooms in order to be able to conduct IT classes and the 20 students per class system (establish "A Learning Environment for the New Generation")
  - Implement national academic achievement surveys
2. Foster youth in becoming open and warm-hearted Japanese through participating in community services and various programs
  - Encourage youth to participate in community services and various programs (or consider such a system) and establish the "Children's Dream Fund"
  - Improve moral education (for example, development and distribution of the "Kokoro no Note" (Notebook to be used by students in moral education.)
  - Take actions for educational revitalization in the home and in the community
3. Improve learning environment to one, which is enjoyable and free of worries
  - Enrich cultural and sporting activities (encourage school club activities)
  - Take appropriate measures concerning problematic behaviors among children (improvement of the suspension system and measures to care such children)
  - Protect Children from harmful information
4. Make schools that can be trusted by parents and communities
  - Implement school evaluation system, including the establishment of the self-evaluation system and introduction of school Councilors
  - Revitalize the school board by means of parental participation and disclosure of information
  - Promote the establishment of new types of schools to fit the needs of the different communities
5. Train teachers as real "professionals" of education
  - Introduce an awards system, a bonus and a special promotion system for outstanding teachers
  - Establish a system where teachers have working community experience (of: take working experience at companies)
  - Take appropriate measures on incompetent teachers, such as teaching suspensions
6. Promote the establishment of universities of International standard
  - Reinforce university education and research functions for bringing up leaders of the next generation (improve the system for admitting 17 year old students into universities, universally introduce a system for admitting students who have

- finished their third year into graduate school, and establish professional schools)
  - Establish a competitive environment (grant national universities the status of independent administrative corporations. promote fixed-term employment so that professors can transfer easily, increase competitive grants)
  - Implement a strict grading system for university students and focus on the teaching abilities of academic
7. Establish an educational philosophy suitable for the new century and improve the provision for education

#### IV. Monitoring and Evaluation of Lifelong Learning by Learners during 2000 (%)

(N=1,544 persons, M.T.=205,8%)

Why learning?

Enriched life	52.4
Improved health	43.1
Use in daily and community life	25.1
Use in work and getting job	24.5
Use in further deep knowledge and skills	17.9
Use in volunteering activities	11.9
Acquire certificate	11.5
Use in guidance or instruction of Cultural activities and sports	9.8
Have not used	7.6
Others	0.1
Difficult to answer	0.7

Resource: "Opinion Survey on Lifelong Learning", Public Relations Office, Cabinet Office, December 2000

(Comments and Other Perspectives)

- (1) Through learning, over 50% of learners enjoyed learning and enriched their life. And 43.1% of learners improved their health. Learners gained satisfaction from knowing their level of achievement in course completed.
- (2) 36.0% of learners through vocational training courses acquired certificate or up-graded their career development,
- (3) 11.9% of people surveyed found their learning useful for their volunteering activities.

## V. Conclusion and Strategies

In order to create an enriching and dynamic society in the 21st century, it is vital to aim toward the realization of a lifelong learning society in which people can freely choose learning opportunities at any time during their lives, and receive proper recognition for their learning achievements.

### (Lifelong Learning for All)

- 1) Traditionally, Confucianism has influenced learning in Japan since 7<sup>th</sup> century. Even in the present, Japanese people respect examinations, qualifications, certificates and academic careers. In addition they feel that learning is the pleasure which Kong zi, the founder of Confucianism said it was in the "Lun Yu.", which is part of the Confucian "Analects". European thought has emphasized that education and learning is a human right.

The right to education and opportunities relates to living safer, healthier, more productive and more fulfilling lives. It is supported by the aspirations of individuals. The report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century "Learning: The Treasure Within" (Chairman: Jacques Delors) mentioned the four pillars of education as principles. That is Learning to know, Learning to do, Learning to live together and Learning to be.

- 2) In Japan, the word of "Lifelong Learning" is known to 74 % of the population but only 45% of people are involved in lifelong learning activity. More than half of the population is outside of the field of lifelong learning. The greatest reason for this that they have no time to do so because of the pressure of work and lack of motivation. It is clear that in creating a learning environment as well as learning society. We must raise consciousness of lifelong learning and the attention paid to it.
- 3) The special target groups in expanding learning opportunities for gaining literacy are people returning from China and their families, foreign workers and their families, women married Japanese local farmers, people who failed in school and dropped out and handicapped people. The public sector and NPO should explore a learning system using computer technology.
- 4) Older people aged over 65 are 16.7% of the total population and 14% of the men. among them graduated from higher education. The level of learning required includes that of a higher academic level and not only high school level.
- 5) In the processes of the development of information technology and globalization, computer literacy, international communication, literacy and legal understanding became social needs.

We should consider the reuse and recycling of computers at international level.

### (A Learning Society for Community Development towards Civil Society)

- 6) Learning and activities related to volunteering are rapidly expanding. The great earthquake in Hanshin-Awaji area in 1995 stimulated interest and activity in volunteering and since then such interest has included learning activities for participation in community development

The major difficulties for volunteers are the time constraints and lack of information. Many people expect learning to play a role in understanding the nature of volunteering.

At present almost these activities are included in NPO activities. The number of NPO recognized by the government as of 2001 June in the field of lifelong learning is 1,690 and for arts and sports 1,130. These NPO activities in Japan correspond to the Dakar Framework for Action, especially Strategies No.3 and No.4, which read as follows:

No.3 Ensure the engagement and participation of civil society in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of strategies for educational development

No.4 Develop responsive, participatory and accountable systems of educational governance and management

- 7) New types of learning and volunteering with IT.

In general 95.8% of enterprises use Internet and 34.0% of households. The Internet facilitates the linkage of people with each other quickly and efficiently beyond their community and locality. It is especially a tool for those living in remote area, the elderly and handicapped people. IT creates various possibilities for learning and volunteering. NPOs are groups for volunteer activities and civic organizations. "Information volunteers" are especially valuable in communicating and networking of civil society.

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